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EDITORIAL

My short piece in the January issue about the Hudson Valley UFO sightings seems to have generated quite a lot of heat. Philip Klass says that not only were formations of light aircraft responsible for generating the flap, but that the pilots set out deliberately to generate UFO reports. Jerome Clark apparently favours taking the reports at face value. On the Internet, I am castigated by Tim Matthews for apparently failing to notice that other types of aircraft were involved. However, I never said that *all* of the sightings were attributable to light aircraft, so I am not sure what he is getting at. Further polemical letters or short articles on this subject will be welcome.

BETTY HILL'S MEDICAL NIGHTMARE

Martin S. Kottmeyer

Among the finer papers presented at the famed 1992 MIT Abduction Conference was one titled 'Medical Procedural Differences: Alien vs. Human'. The author was John G. Miller, a physician who got his MD at the Baylor College of Medicine and practised full-time emergency medicine. Though perhaps a bit too succinct and general, the paper was perceptive, thoughtful, and fully convincing in what it had to say. Alien abduction experiences do medicine in ways both grossly and subtly different from that practised by human doctors. Aliens ignore parts of the body that human doctors take great interest in, such as the upper intestines and the heart. Aliens show more interest in the skin and the cranium than human doctors do. They do absurd things like remove eyes, do therapy with coloured lights, and remove severe pain by touching the forehead. Miller offered a conclusion that was carefully measured and worded: 'The differences between reported alien and known human medical techniques and procedures are great enough to invalidate any theory that these reports somehow originate in the witnesses' own past medical experience or knowledge'. (1)

In the audience was John Mack and he was quick to take Miller's talk to the next level. 'The information you are providing is extremely helpful from the psychiatric medical standpoint. It establishes the difficulty of finding any theoretical explanation for this from human imagination or dream or anything of this kind.' (2) Miller was more cautious than that and there is clear disbelief in a number of the alien procedures. I accept Miller's opinion, but Mack's is another matter entirely. He leaps to his opinion oblivious of the wider environment from which the human imagination and dreams can take up material. To demonstrate the flaw here, I will take up the matter once more of Betty Hill's nightmare of forced medical examination.

During the day after her and her husband's UFO sightings, Betty became concerned that they might have been exposed to radiation from the UFO. Almost every ufologist from Keyhoe and Lorenzen to Ruppelt and Menzel discussed stories about radiation being detected from UFOs. Atomic engines powered UFOs. That was the speculation. Betty discussed her fear of contamination with her sister and she in turn contacted a physicist. He suggested any ordinary compass might detect radiation by the needle showing disturbance on contact with the car's surface.

Finding a compass, Betty rushed out into the rain and ran the compass along the wet side of the car. At first there was no effect, but then she saw some shiny circles on the car, each the size of a silver dollar. At that moment, she recalled that the beeping noise they heard the previous night came from the direction of the trunk. When she placed the compass on one of the spots, the needle wavered. 'She almost panicked, but got control of herself.' She tried it again and the needle went out of control. She eventually got Barney to do the tests, but he didn't think anything abnormal was going on and suggested that the compass was just reacting to the metal of the car. The test convinced her, however. This left her haunted by the realisation that she and her husband had been contaminated.

The circles on the trunk echo a UFO case from the 1957 Sputnik UFO flap. Mildred Wenzel at that time was reported to have pockmarks on her car that were tested with a Geiger counter and showed radioactivity. This may be some sort of folkloric cousin to the sociologically notorious Seattle Windshield Pitting Epidemic when people started to connect pits in windshields to fallout from a nuclear test. Commentators dismiss the notion that a compass could detect radioactivity. Barney

probably had it right. Normal magnetism in the metal could probably explain a compass needle wavering off magnetic north. A needle out of control might signify other things, but this is of no consequence here. The important point is this. Regardless of the test's validity, Betty feared she had been exposed to radioactive contamination.

Some ten days later, Betty had a series of vivid nightmares that form the basis of her abduction account. Our interest here is in the medical examination. The examiner asks her name. They discuss what vegetables are. She tries to tell him about meat and milk, but their meaning eludes him. 'My hair was closely examined, and he removed a few strands and then cut a larger piece on the back left-hand side. I was not able to see what he used for cutting purposes.' He looks down her throat. He looks in her ears and collects wax. He examines the hands and fingernails and takes a piece of the fingernail. Next, a look at the feet. 'They showed much interest in my skin.' An apparatus gives them a magnified look at it. Then one scrapes a letter opener-like instrument along the arm.

A machine is pulled over with wires that each end in a needle. The needle is touched to points all over her body. It is a test of her nervous system. Sometimes it made a limb jerk or twitch. 'Both men were highly interested in this test.' Then comes the pregnancy test. A needle is inserted into her navel with a sudden thrust. There is great pain. The examiners are startled and the leader 'waved his hand in front of my eyes. Immediately the pain was completely gone, and I relaxed'. The test ends and they discuss things for a while, but then the examiner returns to look at her teeth to see if they are removable. Barney wore dentures and they were amazed they were removable. Discussion resumes with stuff like the star map, but there are no more medical matters.

One can hardly deny the differences to typical doctor's exams are more striking than the few similarities. Hair samples? Skin scraping? What is all this about? Where's the blood sample, the urine sample? How about that wave of the hand over the eyes to stop the pain? That seems distinctly hocus-pocus; too much like the hokey theatrics of a levitation act. I won't explore the issue of if one could develop an apologetic to explain these things within the context of real aliens. I could bluff one if needed, but my interest is to show that an alternative interpretation is readily available.

Betty feared radiation exposure. Not surprisingly, her nightmare is centred on medical concerns. In the fifties, the medical consequences of nuclear fallout were given prominence in the wake of a test called Project Bravo. On 1 March 1954 the US detonated an atomic bomb on the Bikini atoll of the Marshall Islands. Fallout ash descended on a Japanese fishing boat called the *Lucky Dragon*. Most of the crew of 23 fell ill with nausea, pain, and skin inflammation. Doctors in Tokyo examined the men, cross checking data with the medical experiences gained from Hiroshima. They were confused, however, by the presence of residual radioactivity. 'Even after hair cuts, nail-clippings, and a thorough scrubbing, the fishermen retained radioactivity on their skin.' (3)

Clips from newsreels of Marshall Islanders being examined after Project Bravo contained one image demonstrating the nature of hair loss caused by the contamination. An examiner gently pulls a clump of several strands of hair from the head. No scissors or other implements are used. Only two fingers are used. Another image, said to be of skin lesions, shows patches of depigmentation on the arm of a native. The image easily suggests the impression that layers of skin had been peeled or scraped off. (4) Here, then, is the possible source of the procedures of hair sampling, nail cutting, skin inspection and skin scraping.

The needles run over Betty's body have their obvious source in the compass needle run over the car. The reactions of twitching are a variation on her nervous anxiety over the results of the compass needle test.

The pregnancy test has multiple interpretations. First, fallout was known to cause mutations and foetal deformities from the experience in Hiroshima. Pregnancy would be undesirable and of high concern. The navel could be metaphorically a match to the circular pockmark on the car trunk, and the pain of Betty and the startled examiner would reflect fear of death coupled with the disbelief she experienced from Barney. I should mention that it is not unusual for dream imagery to be overdetermined and this interpretation probably complements rather than contradicts the interpretation of the needle in the navel offered in an earlier discussion. (5) The hand-wave to relieve the pain is simple magic; hypnotic induction has long been used as a means of combating pain. I doubt anyone fully awake would believe it would work on the pain resulting from a needle thrust into the abdomen, but this is a nightmare and not subject to such considerations.

Vegetables, meat, and especially milk were all things that possessed hazards of contamination from fallout. In the *Lucky Dragon* incident, tuna were warehoused while the officials pondered the issue of whether the contamination was bad enough to prevent their selling. Milk was widely feared because of tests that showed the presence of strontium-90. With vegetables, the question was whether washing them would be enough to remove the danger of fallout. The fact that the meaning of these foods eludes the understanding of the alien could be taken to indicate a crude form of denial or cover-up analogous to governmental behaviour of downplaying radiation dangers.

The shock of the dentures is a nice touch and seems to build on the infamous crash-retrieval yarn of Koehler. A prominent feature of the aliens singled out for attention was that they had perfect teeth. The Koehler yarn made it on to the national newswires and does not require that Betty knew anything about UFO literature. Keyhoe dismissed it as nonsense in an early book, but it was not

mentioned in Keyhoe's *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy*, the book we know Betty read shortly before her nightmares. It could be that the mouth exam earlier in the experience was a set-up for this scene, but that seems a bit calculating for a dream. It may only reflect an intrusion of more normal medical procedures into the dream. The ear wax sample and the foot exam are details I offer no comment on. Whether they could be accounted for by more knowledge of the Project Bravo incident or by idiosyncrasies from Betty's life and experiences can be speculated about, but I trust the details accounted for in this interpretation are sufficient to make the point that Mack's reasoning was flawed. Human imagination and dreams can explain the medical details of this very important abduction with no profound difficulties.

The fact that Betty Hill's medical nightmare has a simple undeniable relationship to her understandable anxiety makes assumptions about the involvement of aliens strictly unnecessary. It is a well-known fact that later abductions occasionally echo material from the Hill case, most especially in a fondness for needles in alien medical procedures. Cultural transmission is the simple deduction.

Later abductions also show great divergences from the Hill case. I have suggested origins for a number of procedures in other articles: nose implants, (6) anal probes, (7) brain removal, eye removal, (8) heart removal, (9) embryo implantation, (10) ectogenesis. (11) They come from sources ranging from bad films to medical quackery to major literature. I have reason to believe a number of other alien procedures come from similar sources. Alien medicine is not much like human medicine, but it is very much like a horror constructed by the human imagination.

References

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2. *Ibid.*, 62
3. Radnet website, Information about source points of anthropogenic radioactivity: item 3A Marshall Islands - *Lucky Dragon* Incident
4. The relevant newsreel clips most recently surfaced in the documentary 'Race for the Superbomb', the 11 January 1999 edition of *The American Experience*. Video available from PBS, the Public Broadcasting Service
5. 'Entirely Unpredisposed', *Magonia*, 35
6. A real-life sinus operation performed on Larson: 'The Alien Booger Menace', *The REALL News*, 1, 6, July 1993
7. Blockbuster Total Recall: 'Probe D'Roid', *The REALL News*, 2, 6, June 1994
8. 'Spock's Brain', generally accepted as *Star Trek*'s worst episode, and for eye removal see the tricks of the psychic surgeons of the Philippines: 'The Curse of the Space Mummies', *The REALL News*, 3, 5, May 1995
9. Killers from Space: 'Gauche Encounters: Badfilms and the UFO Mythos' - still unpublished by popular demand
10. Horror Planet: 'Spawn of the Inseminoid', *The REALL News*, 2, 5, May 1994
11. Brave New World: 'Water EBEs', *The REALL News*, 3, 2, February 1995

LETTERS

After reading your piece on the 'Hudson Valley UFOs' I began to wonder if you were talking about the sightings with which the rest of us are familiar. I also was puzzled by your statement that 'ETH ufologists are not very interested in these sightings'.

I am not sure what an 'ETH ufologist' is, but in fact the Westchester sightings are quite interesting and hard to square with Philip J. Klass's beloved private pilots. Unless you dismiss, without justification, all of the witness testimony to the contrary - hardly a scientific procedure (as David Hufford has documented to devastating effect) - the Westchester events remain among the most interesting in the history of the UFO phenomenon. Boomerang-shaped UFOs, of course, have a long history, going back to 1947 at least.

One particularly remarkable feature, older than 1947, is the frequent reference to brilliant searchlights. There is also the extraordinary episode at the Indian Point nuclear reactor complex, well investigated by Philip Imbrogno, who is the Philip to whom we ought to be listening here. There is also the consideration that the objects hovered for considerable periods of time, sometimes as much as 20 minutes. Witnesses often reported that the object accelerated from a very slight speed to a rapid one in five seconds or less. Other witnesses, including aircraft experts, rejected the ultralight theory as an explanation for what they saw, and an analysis by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of a videotape concluded that the object was an unknown, not a formation of aircraft. Witnesses who saw both the UFO and the Stormville aircraft insisted they were not the same.

If we are to ignore such testimony and such evidence, all we are left with is the usual feeble wheeze. The witnesses are 'irrational' and always wrong, at least if they're describing something anomalous; investigators who take them seriously are . . . Americans (gasp!) . . . and we all know what *they're* like. Phil Klass, who 'kindly' provides clippings, knows better, as do those who, having deemed all inconvenient witness testimony the raving of fools whose perceptual abilities and judgements barely suffice to get them safely across the street, are gratified to find, once again, that the 'psychosocial hypothesis' explains all. Or, as some of us find ever more reason to suspect, nothing at all.

Jerome Clark, Canby, Minnesota

Thank you for the 'credit' as the source of info on the Hudson Valley boomerang UFO sightings in the January issue of *Magonia Monthly Supplement*. One correction: the general aviation (GA) pilots involved were intentionally trying to create UFO reports and did not 'get together to practise formation flying at night' although some of them might have made such a claim.

At the time I began investigating the case I had planned to visit the area. But I learned that an APRO investigator with whom I was on friendly terms (whose name I now forget) had investigated the case and concluded it was a hoax. So I called him to confirm.

He told me that he himself had seen the giant UFO 'dissipate' as the individual GA aircraft 'peeled off' and landed; that he had talked with several of the pilots, who refused to give him their names. But one pilot told him that they used 'coded signals', i.e., when the squadron leader wanted to turn right, he would click his radio transmit button once; when he planned to turn left, he would click it twice; when all the aircraft were to turn on their landing lights, he would click his mike button three times, etc.

I was concerned that there might be a mid-air collision which not only might kill the dare-devil pilots, but might kill or injure innocent citizens on the ground. So I telephoned the Deputy Administrator for GA at the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) to inform him of the situation. His initial response was that FAA regulations did *not* forbid pilots from flying close to one another during good visibility (weather) conditions - *so long as all the pilots involved were aware of same*.

My response was: If two or more of these aircraft collide and crash, injuring or killing innocent citizens on the ground, and if the victims' Congressman holds an investigation and you admit that you were aware of the situation and of the potential risks but that there was nothing in the FAA regulations that forbids such dangerous practices - you will be looking for a new job. He said he would think it over.

Later I learned that two FAA inspectors visited the Stormville, NY airport and informed its manager that unless the pilots stopped their dare-devil practice, that when they took their next annual physical exam the FAA medical experts *might* find that these pilots had failed on some technicality and refuse to extend their pilot's licence. Or the FAA might 'discover' some airport deficiency and close down its operations. *Lo and behold*: the giant boomerang UFO stopped coming to Hudson Valley. Philip J. Klass, Washington, D.C.

Re: UFOtrash (*The Great UFO Conspiracy* - Channel 5). You ask: 'Need I say more?' Answer: Yes, possibly. The said programme was largely a cut-and-paste job of another programme shown on Central TV (called *Dreamland*) last August. This in turn was merely a repeat of one originally shown on Sky TV in 1996. Nothing new under the sun!
Christopher Allan, Stoke-on-Trent

ODDS AND ENDS =====

Knee-jerks. Tim Matthews takes your poor old editor to task on the Internet for his piece about the Hudson Valley UFOs. This is apparently because I failed to mention that some of them were sightings of advanced lighter-than-air craft which 'have been developed and flown for thirty years'. Well, obviously not *all* of the sightings were of formations of light aircraft, but then I didn't say they were. Matthews also objects to my item about underground bases, insisting that they really exist. Yes, but that's what I wrote. He protests: 'Underground facilities exist - they're a military fact of life.' Perhaps Matthews should read my limp prose before publishing his knee-jerk reactions to it.

Furby suicides. (*What is a Furby?* It's a kind of talking cuddly toy, m'lud.) Ocean FM, a radio station in Hampshire, received calls from distressed listeners who complained that their Furbies had 'died' when they took part in an experiment conducted by a disc jockey, who had asked them to put them next to the radio to see if they could communicate with his girl friend's Furby in the studio. Within minutes, Furbies were dying all over southern England and attempts to revive them failed. Similar results were obtained when a US station in Rhode Island repeated the experiment, or so it is said. A spokesman for the manufacturers, Tiger Electronics, was sceptical and suggested that the owners' 'imagination was running away from them'. (*The Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1999)

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